TAXI VERDICT IN HALIFAX

Passenger in sex assault case responds to judge's remark that 'clearly, a drunk can consent'

Women gather to discuss best course of action against Judge Gregory Lenehan

metroNEWS

Vancouver metro

Your essential daily news | MONDAY, MARCH 6, 2017

VICKY MOCHAMA

Pointing out casual racism is exhausting — the easier option is to just 'Get Out'

metroVIEWS

High 5°C/Low 2°C Mainly cloudy

A GROWING CONCERN

Advocates aim to help Chinese grocers and farmers survive despite Chinatown gentrification

metroNEWS

Kevin Huang, executive director of the Hua Foundation, holds up an example of 'choi, ' or leafy green vegetable, in a small grocer in Vancouver's Chinatown. WANYEE LI/METRO

Pipeline splits poll

KINDER MORGAN

Half say project will have 'negative' effect on environment

David P. Ball
Metro | Vancouver

Environmental issues are "most likely to determine" how British Columbians vote on May 9, according to a new opinion poll by Forum Research, with both housing and taxes trailing nearly 10 per cent behind as the top election issues two months before the election.

One-quarter of the 1,006 randomly sampled voters said the environment and climate change were their top issue — with 16 per cent saying taxes and 15 per cent, housing.

One environmental issue in particular has captured the attention of many in the province, according to the survey: Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain Expansion Project, which Premier Christy Clark's government approved on Jan. 11.

Exactly fifty per cent of voters polled said they believe the pipeline — set to triple its heavy oil flow from Alberta's oil sands to Burnaby — will have a "negative" effect on B.C.'s environment.

That's four times more than the one-in-eight who think it will have a "positive" environmental effect, and nearly double the number who think its impact will be neutral.

"A huge number say it's going to be negative," said Forum Research president Lorne Bozinoff. "(BC Liberals) are going to lose some support on the environment to the NDP."

Although the pipeline issue saw more than twice as many New Democrat voters see negative environmental impacts than Liberals, among those who said they'd vote for Clark's party, nearly three-in-10 of BC Liberal voters thought Kinder Morgan would negatively affect the environment — 29 per cent saw harm, eight points more than those who saw environmental benefits.

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Your essential daily news

Officials say FBI Director James Comey disputes Trump's claims that Obama wiretapped telephones. **World**

Stratified laneway houses being considered by city

HOUSING

Proposal is part of a suite to densify single family areas

Jen St. Denis
Metro | Vancouver

In an attempt to add more affordable housing for families in a very expensive city, Vancouver may allow laneway houses to be stratified for first-time homebuyers, says the city's chief planner.

It's part of a suite of options the city is looking at when it comes to densifying single family neighbourhoods, many of which lost hundreds of residents in the past five years because families can no longer afford to buy homes in those areas.

"We are looking at everything we do," said Gil Kelly, adding that allowing more homes to be subdivided into duplexes is another example of the infill development the city is looking at. City staff will report to council with some of their recommendations on March 28.

"We're thinking about some new housing types that we don't currently allow in low-density neighbourhoods, but also looking at this through income lens and family size."

Bryn Davidson, the co-owner of Lanefab Design/Build, said stratification makes sense because currently the larger house and laneway house must be owned as one very expensive package, with the owner of the property acting as landlord.

But a laneway house wouldn't be particularly inexpensive: a stratified laneway house would likely cost around $1 million, similar to what a townhouse costs. On small lots, the small backyard dwellings can be 700 square feet in size, while on larger lots they can be built up to 1,000 square feet.

> **We're thinking about some new housing types that we don't currently allow in low-density neighbourhoods.**
> Gil Kelly

Davidson believes the city should allow both more stratification (where owners own pieces of the building on a site, but hold the land in common) and subdivision (where land is divided into separately-owned lots) of single-family lots.

That increased flexibility would allow multi-generational families to co-exist more easily on the same lot — and would allow owners to "convert their equity to cash flow," Davidson said. That could help some homeowners stay in their neighbourhood as they become older.

"The city in the past has been reluctant to add strata because they really thought it was going to lead to a run-up in property values," Davidson said. "The run-up's been happening anyway, and even if the entire lot becomes more expensive, the individual piece that you can purchase becomes less expensive.

Davidson pointed out that when laneway houses were first approved by council in 2009, they didn't have much of an effect on home prices because the zoning applied across all single family zones. (Vancouver's real estate sector was also in a financial crisis-induced slump at that time.)

"If they do it city-wide, then it has a very different impact (on prices) than if they just did it in a little area."

A laneway house between W. 37th and W. 38th avenues in Vancouver. Buildings like this could soon be stratified. ERIC DREGER/THE CANADIAN PRESS

ENVIRONMENT

Concern over fuel spill at fish farm

The leader of a First Nation off the north coast of Vancouver Island says he's worried about the impact a fuel spill at a nearby fish farm will have on his community's food source.

Bob Chamberlin, elected chief councillor Kwikwasat'inuxw Haxwa'mis First Nation, said the area is critical for clam digging, which is a major food source to the community. "It's going to have an impact on our traditional food source. And it's going to have a significant impact on the environment," he said.

The federal fisheries department said the coast guard received a report Sunday about a spill from a fuel tank at an Atlantic salmon aquaculture site in Echo Bay, east of Port Hardy. The statement said an estimated 900 to 1,000 litres of bio diesel overflowed into the water when a fuel pump was left on overnight.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

IN BRIEF

Student dies on ski trip

The Mennonite Educational Institute Secondary school in Abbotsford says a student died during a ski trip.

The head of the school says 11 students and two staff members travelled to Whistler when a student was reported missing Friday. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Keeping 'choi' alive in Chinatown

GENTRIFICATION

Advocates aim to help Chinese grocers, farmers

Wanyee Li
Metro | Vancouver

Advocates in Vancouver's Chinese community are helping local Chinese farmers and grocers survive in the face of gentrification in Chinatown, a place that was once an important hub for B.C. growers.

But developers are moving into the neighbourhood at a rapid pace and more than half of local-food businesses like green grocers, fish mongers, and butchers have closed up shop in the last six years, according to a study by the Hua Foundation. The non-profit was born from a 2009 awareness campaign against the use of shark fin in the food industry.

Gentrification is bad for local food security, said executive director Kevin Huang. This is especially the case in Chinatown, where small grocers stock locally grown Chinese veggies, or "choi," for most of the year, he explained.

These leafy greens, called "choi sum" in Cantonese, are not in season so local grocers buy them from the United States in the winter. WANYEE LI/METRO

"That raises a lot of concerns when real estate and affordability is pushing out small businesses," said the 31-year-old.

"If only corporations are able to survive in neighbourhoods, we are impacting the whole food supply chain and the food economy that is local."

B.C.'s Chinese-vegetable economy is bigger than many think and it's because it operates largely in the shadow of mainstream businesses, Huang explained.

More than 90 per cent of produce grown in the Lower Mainland in the 1920s was cultivated by Chinese farmers in a system segregated by racist policies of the time, according to Kay Anderson, author of Vancouver's Chinatown.

Farming was one of the few occupations Chinese people were allowed to take up in those days, the geography professor said in an email to Metro.

While racist policies are no longer in practice, many small Chinese businesses are still wary of outsiders, said Huang.

"A lot of our partnerships including restaurants and green groceries still work off of this model of credibility and trust. That's one way the community protected itself against racist policies," he said.

> **We are trying to figure out how do we bridge business communities together that have been segregated for so long.**
> Kevin Huang

"We are trying to figure out how do we bridge business communities together that have been segregated for so long."

The Hua Foundation has found some success so far, partnering with Vancouver Farmers' Market (VFM), to encourage participation in the market from both Chinese farmers and consumers.

The eight markets saw a five to 15 per cent increase in the sale of Asian vegetables and a 10 per cent increase in the number of Asian shoppers in 2016, according to VFM project manager Roberta LaQuatlia.

"The market could be better representative of Vancouver's demographics generally and the vendor community could be a better representation of who's shopping."

Quatlia says this season's farmers markets will continue the work, producing multilingual signage and recipes as part of its Local Food Global Flavours program.

The Hua foundation plans to release a food-security report later this month and continue its research on how other Chinese-grocery hubs like the south end of Victoria Street are faring, said Huang.

"When our communities are living side by side and not working together, we're missing lots of opportunities for understanding but also business opportunities that can help everybody."

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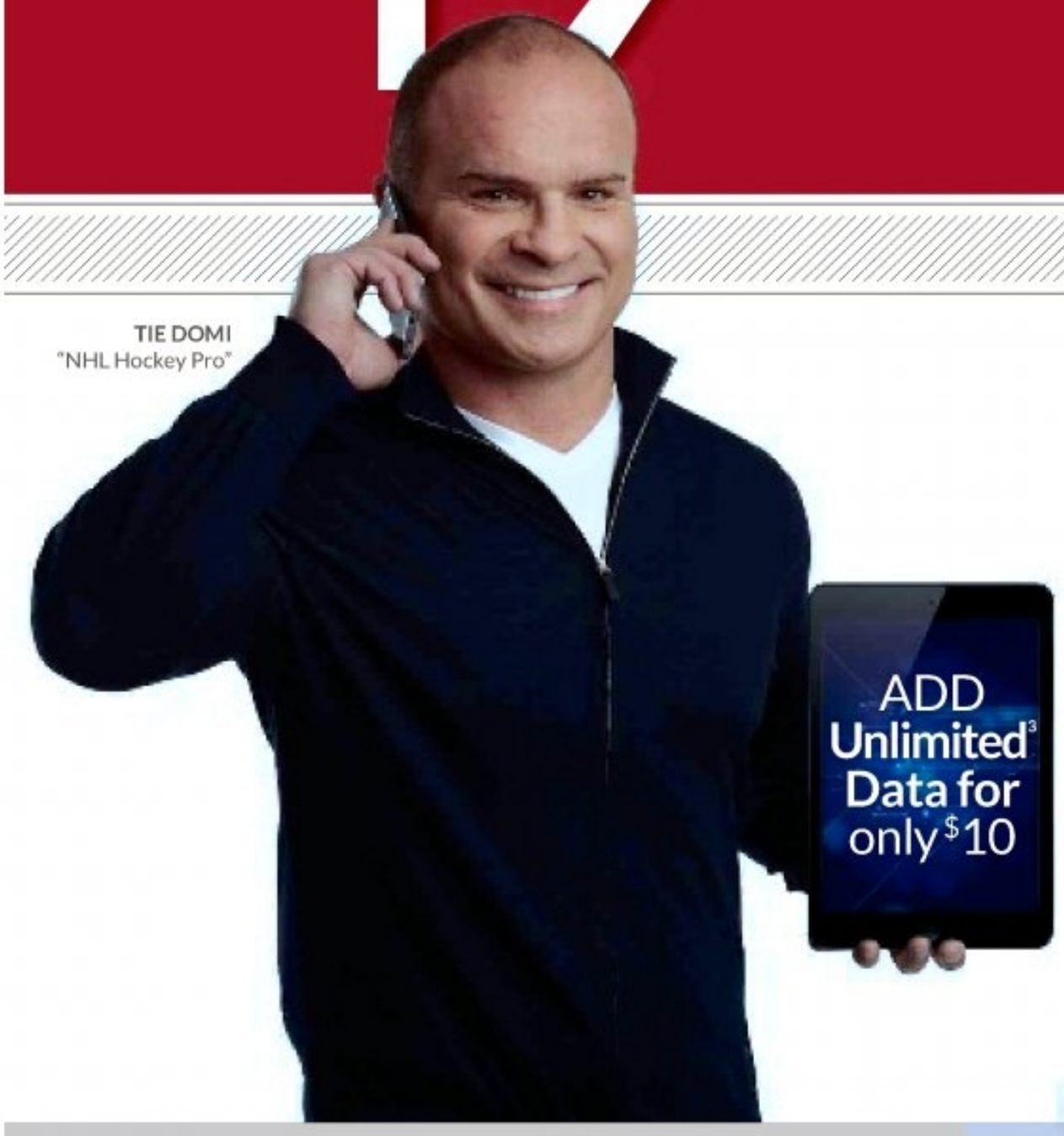

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Decriminalize illicit drugs: Daly

OPIOID CRISIS

Health officer says it's the only real solution to emergency

David P. Ball &
Jen St. Denis
Metro | Vancouver

Vancouver's chief medical health officer Dr. Patricia Daly called on Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Friday to decriminalize all illicit drugs, labelling it the only real solution to a mounting death toll.

At a press conference Friday morning, Trudeau said an earlier expert roundtable and tour of the Downtown Eastside in a police car was "an incredibly emotional opportunity" to listen and "see people struggle with an almost insurmountable challenge."

But Metro was unable to ask Trudeau about Daly's proposal, because his office only permitted media to ask five questions between them — granting two extra after Metro protested that a five-question limit was a hallmark of former prime minister Stephen Harper.

(Trudeau's press secretary countered that he made "hundreds" of Vancouver availabilities last year, and that he was about to sit down with the founder of the Daily Hive blog).

When asked if Trudeau would offer dedicated funding toward the opioid crisis, Trudeau dodged the question.

"We have committed as a government to do more," he replied. "We know there is much more to do.... It's really important for all Canadians to know that this is something that we cannot continue to ignore, we cannot continue to stigmatize."

Daly praised Ottawa for supporting overdose prevention sites and making it easier to prescribe heroin — though currently only 130 patients are allowed it, despite clear evidence of its efficacy.

"What I really want to see, and this government may not be ready to go here yet, is that I think that we need to decriminalize all illicit drugs quite urgently because this crisis is a crisis of a contaminated illicit drug supply," Daly told Metro in a phone interview.

The health officer clarified she was not talking about creating a legal market for illicit drugs like heroin, but "a regulatory approach that means essentially legalizing all psychoactive substances but strictly controlling their distribution."

The overdose death rate has shot up because the entire illicit drug supply has become contaminated with the powerful synthetic opioid fentanyl, and even more potent variations of the drug such as carfentanil.

Coupled with increased access to doctor-controlled programs such as prescription heroin or hydromorphone, decriminalizing all illicit drugs would reduce the stigma that pushes many drug users to use alone, where no one can come to their aid should they overdose, Daly said.

But the money currently spent on enforcement could also be redirected to social programs to reduce poverty, homelessness and childhood neglect — the "social determinants of health" that are the root causes of addiction, Daly said, as Portugal did when it decriminalized drugs.

"So I would say: start now, decriminalize all drugs and begin the discussion about a regulatory approach to all psychoactive substances," she added. "Just as the government's done with marijuana, we need to start doing that with all drugs."

Dr. Patricia Daly, the chief medical health officer at Vancouver Coastal Health. JENNIFER GAUTHIER/METRO FILE

Ramp up fight vs. fentanyl, say voters

A new public opinion poll from Forum Research has found that two-thirds of voters across the province believe their government hasn't done enough to stem the epidemic that's claimed more than 1,000 lives in the past year.

The results of the survey of 1,061 randomly selected British Columbians — obtained exclusively by Metro — found that 63 per cent of the province want their government to do more to address the crisis, 12 per cent "a lot more," while just 27 per cent said B.C. had done enough.

"It's a reflection this is a serious issue; it's a huge number of people," said Forum Research president Lorne Bozinoff. But most of those who said the province should do more were New Democrat voters, according to the poll — 60 per cent of whom wanted more done — while more than four-in-10 BC Liberal voters believe their party had done enough.

"They don't see the urgency the New Democrat supporters do," he suggested. "So there's not as much pressure on the government to do more, because big chunks of their constituents — and would-be constituents — think they've done enough."

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Passenger sends thanks for support

HALIFAX TAXI VERDICT

Woman at centre of cab driver case speaks of shock

Haley Ryan
Metro | Halifax

If this was a man, do you think that (Lenehan) would be making those comments at him? I don't believe so.

The passenger in taxi case

When she can't sleep at night, the passenger at the centre of the Halifax taxi sexual assault acquittal said she opens her phone to read comments from hundreds of strangers, their support like a "blanket" of protection.

Since Judge Gregory Lenehan declared Bassam Al-Rawi not guilty last week, his words like "clearly, a drunk can consent," and the case evidence have sparked a national outcry, official complaints to the Chief Justice, and future protests.

"The kind of terms that (Lenehan) used and the statements that he made, are making people question that credibility. Kind of like how they were supposed to be questioning my credibility," said the woman in an interview, whose identity is protected by a publication ban.

She spoke to Metro on the weekend.

"We need to believe beyond a reasonable doubt you were making a fair decision here, and I don't think that people felt that way."

The passenger, a woman in her 20s, said she's seen many assume the case began with her complaint.

In fact, she said police pressed charges after an officer found her drunk, unconscious and partially naked in the cab.

It was the Crown that chose to prosecute Al-Rawi. Her only involvement was being called to testify, where she said she could remember nothing about the incident. A forensic analyst determined the woman's blood-alcohol level was as high as 241 milligrams per 100 millilitres of blood - about three times the legal limit.

Until the verdict she only hoped the judge would listen to testimony, examine the evidence, and come up with a "fair decision," she said, understanding few sexual assault cases end in conviction.

But last Thursday, the woman walked into work and first read about the evidence in a Metro issue, as well as Lenehan's comments that the Crown had failed to prove she did not consent to sexual activity.

"That was definitely when the flames came up and I thought 'What? This is your reason?' I was shocked," she said, shaking her head.

Lenehan's phrase that "clearly, a drunk can consent" really hit her, the woman said, since the situation may be "clear" to Lenehan "but to the rest of the world you can't really speak to that."

After reading it, she said she felt "completely stripped naked," and as if everyone was looking at her. It's been an especially odd, "out-of-body" feeling to have friends and co-workers who don't know she was the passenger bring it up, she said.

But online comments supporting her, and calling for a review into Lenehan's judgment, have been very comforting when she's unable to sleep at night, she said.

"It makes me feel better. It's like the city, especially women in the city but a lot of men too, have just been kind of forming this blanket around me like 'We're not going to stand by this,'" she said.

"If people weren't … making their voices heard I think that verdict and all of that would have just been so much worse because it would've just felt like 'Wow, the system's broken and nobody's here to fix it.'"

She's glad an official complaint has been made to the Chief Justice about Lenehan's judgment, she said, and no matter what happens "as far as sexual assault cases go, specifically, he should have no part in those anymore."

The woman said it's up to the Crown to appeal the case, but if she's again called to testify she will not only because it's her legal duty, but because of "all these people rallying around. For my part I have to kind of be the voice behind that as well."

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Women gather to prepare complaints

HALIFAX TAXI VERDICT

Judge's verdict drew national attention

Cody McEachern
For Metro | Halifax

Four women met around a table at the Halifax Central Library on Sunday afternoon.

They were there to discuss Judge Gregory Lenehan and his decision to acquit taxi driver Bassam Al-Rawi of sexual assault of a female passenger.

"How much more evidence do you need to prove sexual assault," Elise MacIntyre said to the other women. "He didn't care about her, and he shouldn't be the one to make a decision on the well-being of a woman again."

They all nodded and scribbled down notes on pads of paper in front of them.

MacIntyre organized the meeting after she took to Facebook to find out how to file a complaint against the judge, whose verdict has drawn national attention over comments that the Crown was not able to prove the complainant's "lack of consent" despite her high intoxication level, and the remark that "clearly, a drunk can consent."

"Everyone was talking about sending a letter," said MacIntyre. "But I kept getting different bits of information from people I spoke to on Facebook, it seemed the process kept changing. So I felt it would be good if a bunch of us could come together to brainstorm and figure out how to get our voices heard."

At the meeting, they discussed the best course of action to get an investigation started on Lenehan, and took notes to pass on to those who couldn't make it.

Martha Cody, Sarah Bezanson and Ingrid Cottonden write down notes as Elise MacIntyre reads out a message from a lawyer on the topic of Judge Gregory Lenehan. CODY MCEACHERN/METRO

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Clean-up underway after bio diesel spills

The leader of a First Nation off the north coast of Vancouver Island says he's worried about the impact a fuel spill at a nearby fish farm will have on his community's food source.

Bob Chamberlin, elected chief councillor Kwikwasat'inuxw Haxwa'mis First Nation, said the area is critical for clam digging, which is a major food source to the community.

"When you look at it, I think, 'Good golly.' It's going to have an impact on our traditional food source. And it's going to have a significant impact on the environment," he said.

The federal fisheries department said the coast guard received a report early Sunday morning about a spill from a fuel tank at an Atlantic salmon aquaculture site in Echo Bay.

The statement said an estimated 900 to 1,000 litres of bio diesel overflowed into the water when a fuel pump was left on overnight.

The company that owns the site, Cermaq Canada, issued a statement that said records show that up to 1,500 litres was spilled.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Trump 'confusing' on gay rights

President Donald Trump signs an executive order in the Oval Office in January. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

EQUALITY

Some worried president isn't the one making policies

Before same-sex marriage was legal anywhere in America, a gay activist in Florida twice brought a date to the Mar-a-Lago club. Each time, Rand Hoch and his guest were greeted by the smiling face of Donald Trump.

"Great eye contact. Firm handshake. The same way with everybody who came in," Hoch, founder and president of the Palm Beach County Human Rights Council, recalled. "There was no difference at all with my dates and me and the people in back of me or in front of me. He's out there, he's personable, and there's no way he's going to treat anybody differently."

Never before has the leader of the Republican Party shown as much public comfort with gay people as this one has. Trump has attended gay weddings, donated to gay causes, and welcomed gay couples as Mar-a-Lago members when they were still shunned by other Florida clubs.

Now he is president, and much of the LGBTQ community is apprehensive.

"I don't think he is making policy. I think he's surrounded himself with some horrible people when it comes to LGBTQ issues, they're the ones that are making policy, and he's going to sign whatever Steve Bannon puts in front of him," said Hoch.

> **I think he's surrounded himself with some horrible people.**
> Rand Hoch

"It's not like there's anybody in the official administration who's an advocate of treating LGBTQ people the way we treat every other American."

Trump's vice-president, Christian conservative Mike Pence, approved an Indiana law that permitted businesses to cite "religious freedom" to defend against claims of anti-gay discrimination. Bannon, his chief strategist, ran a website that published anti-gay articles. Most notably, Attorney General Jeff Sessions has a long record of fierce opposition to LGBTQ rights.

The six-week-old administration has sent mixed signals so far, alternately heartening and disquieting LGBTQ advocates.

In one of his earliest statements, Trump said he would preserve an Obama order that banned anti-LGBTQ discrimination by federal contractors – his team explaining "he continues to be respectful and supportive of LGBTQ rights, just as he was throughout the election."

Three weeks later, though, his administration withdrew an Obama directive telling schools to allow transgender students to use bathrooms matching their gender identity. In a Friday letter, the Log Cabin Republicans, a gay group that has been supportive of Trump, expressed "deep concerns" about that decision.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Political digest

Denial and discord follow wiretap claim

President Donald Trump turned to Congress on Sunday for help finding evidence to support his unsubstantiated claim that former President Barack Obama had Trump's telephones tapped during the election. Obama's intelligence chief said no such action was ever carried out, and a U.S. official said the FBI has asked the Justice Department to dispute the allegation.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Muslim travel ban changes are on the way

Donald Trump is preparing to sign a revised executive order temporarily barring the entry of people from certain Muslim-majority countries. An official said the new order aims to overcome the legal challenges to the first. Its goal will be the same: keep would-be terrorists out of the United States while the government reviews the vetting system for refugees and visa applicants.

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metro VIEWS
Your essential daily news

PHILOSOPHER CAT by Jason Logan

URBAN ETIQUETTE ELLEN VANSTONE

THE QUESTION
How do you respond to baseless statements about newcomers?

Dear Ellen,

In old Toronto, American visitors would comment on the good manners of the city's burghers and their clean streets. Then Pierre Trudeau introduced an open-door immigrant policy that encouraged tens of thousands of uneducated, poverty-stricken, and culturally alien newcomers to our major cities. Toronto is now home to hundreds of thousands of Third World immigrants, refugees, asylum-seekers, and illegals who have formed ghettos in an effort to keep their culture alive and not integrate. Unfortunately, this often includes the worst elements of their previous cultures, hence the unprecedented increase in violent crime. So don't expect Canadian manners and morals from this group. The most we can expect is that our police can get on top of the crime wave and make our streets safer.

Derek Holloway, Etobicoke

Dear Derek,

According to the 2013 book The Truth About Trudeau, the number of immigrants admitted annually declined from 183,974 in 1968 when PET took office to 90,000 by 1984, when he left. During the Progressive Conservatives' Mulroney years, it escalated to 250,000 by 1993. Today, over half the population of Toronto was born outside Canada, according to the city website. As for crime, news about shootings is alarming, but sensational headlines disguise the fact that in Toronto homicides are down, from 86 in 2007 to 69 in 2016 according to the police.

But the facts of the case aren't the point. It's how you have perceived them. I can't argue with how you feel, but since you wrote to me, I'll share where I'm coming from. My world view is shaped by being raised Christian. I'm no longer religious, but I still live by the golden rule: Treat others as you would have them treat you.

Where you see newcomers walling themselves off "to keep their culture alive and not integrate," I see folks sticking together out of a need for companionship and safety. I don't believe anyone flees war, persecution, oppression or poverty because they want to live separate from and resented by people. I'm so proud of Toronto and Canada for the support we give to newcomers so they can rise up from their disadvantaged beginnings here, and contribute to a richer society for all of us. Our multicultural city, in my view, is the true meaning of Christianity — in Technicolor.

It can be frightening to see "normal" life in Canada disrupted by people who don't think or act like you, and who don't want to. But their presence here is also a wonderful opportunity for us to put our own standards of human decency to the test — and hope we measure up.

Need advice?
Email Ellen:
scene@metronews.ca

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In Get Out, it's the little things that are frighteningly real

Vicky Mochama
Metro

At a friend's wedding shower, a friend of the bride's mother greeted me with enthusiastic warmth.

"Hey! I haven't seen you in a while. How are things?"

We'd never met.

She had confused me for a new neighbour of hers. What did the new neighbour and I have in common? We are both black women.

I wasn't sure what to do except to laugh it off.

In Get Out, the recent Jordan Peele horror film, I saw the same instinct to laugh off racial incidents from Chris, the film's main character. Instead of a dramedy like Guess Who's Coming To Dinner, Get Out turns the idea of a black man meeting his white partner's parents into a thriller about the real and perceived danger of being the only black person in a predominantly white space.

There's a scene that surely reads differently depending on who you are.

Chris, a black photographer goes with his girlfriend, Rose, to meet her parents on their pastoral property in upstate New York. Her father takes Chris on a tour of the house.

For the untrained ear, it sounds like any house tour: A souvenir from Bali. A photo of his dad, who raced Jesse Owens. The maid. For me, the entire conversation sounded like, "Hey Chris, you're black. This is a new room, and by the way, you're black."

By pointing out his worldliness and adjacency to black people and black history, the father is signalling his bona fides on race while at the same time reminding Chris that, as a black man, he is different. (Later, he will insist that he would have voted for Obama a third time if he could.)

The way the conversation subtly pivots to race is just one of the ways in which people who wouldn't consider themselves to be racist can come off as racist.

They may be well-intentioned, but it often feels like an effort to address race by subterfuge. Rather than actually say aloud "I noticed you're black," a lot of people will say a more general phrase like "My cousin's kid is doing a semester in Africa."

The movie has more overt moments of reminding Chris he's black.

These seemingly innocuous incidents pile up yet they're hardly worth delivering a seminar on race to the offenders. Because of the semblance of innocence, it is hard to point to them as evidence.

That's the rub of racism in progressive places, especially dominantly white spaces. It is hard to put together the comments, questions and asides for other people in a way that spells out the racism.

The easier option is to get out.

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metro LIFE

Your essential daily news

Critics say blue mania at Paris Fashion Week is a statement about 'the blues' over the rise of nationalism

Firecracking the gender code

Comedian Naomi Snieckus's new podcast Firecracker Department will feature guests who can speak about the behind-the-scenes of the entertainment industry. Among those scheduled so far are: Jayne Eastwood, Annie Murphy, Bette Macdonald, and Debra McGrath. CONTRIBUTED

PODCAST

Naomi Snieckus interviews bright, loud, bold women

Steve Gow
For Metro Canada

Naomi Snieckus has accomplished much in Canadian showbiz. She has accrued Canadian Comedy Awards for improvisation and appeared in dozens of homegrown television shows (including her current role on CBC's Mr. D). But now the multi-talented actress has a new mission — propelling the term "firecracker lady" into the zeitgeist.

"A firecracker is someone who is unabashed, somebody who is unapologetic," explained Snieckus recently from Los Angeles. "They're bright and loud and bold and they're all the women that I talk to."

Energized by her colleagues in the male-dominated entertainment industry, Snieckus has created the podcast Firecracker Department with intent to spotlight the most intriguing women in entertainment by sharing a glass of good wine and even better conversation.

"This is new to me, this world of interviewing," admits Snieckus. "We're not sitting at a desk, our shoes are off — it's got a little bit more of a casual feel, (so) you have a glass of wine and a cheese plate and you go, 'Oh, this is going to be a little bit different.'"

It's also not just putting the focus on the most famous female voices in 'the biz' either. Although Snieckus has certainly caught up with top talents like legendary character-actor Jayne Eastwood (Hairspray, TV's SCTV) and Annie Murphy (Schitt's Creek), she also aims to introduce audiences to unfamiliar writers, editors and other behind-the-scenes personalities.

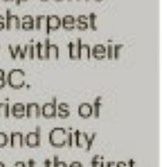
"There's so much more in-depth discussion to have with these women," said Snieckus, who even plans to include her aspiring 9-year-old firecracker niece in a future episode. "I asked her what's her advice to women and she was like, 'Do what you want to do'. That's so great — she's such an inspiring little creature because she hasn't been told she can't do anything yet."

Firecracker Department premiered last week with episodes every Monday on iTunes and YouTube.

While Snieckus promises funny conversations that probe the "victories, embarrassments and vagaries of fame," she also hopes that women are stirred by the podcast as well. Indeed, under a still-new Trump presidency, women's rights feel as if they've stalled momentarily so inspiration may be more important than ever.

"If you've got something good to say, say it loudly," said Snieckus. "In general, intelligent people can't speak loud enough. Some people can't speak quiet enough, but in this case, I think more venues for women's voices is always essential."

DREAM GUESTS



Catherine O'Hara
The improv legend stars on TV's Schitt's Creek.
"If you look at (her) performances, she doesn't just rest at being a comedian," said Snieckus. "She finds depth in everything she does."

Carol Burnett
The comedy icon has been called "a bona-fide feminist hero".
"Folks (like her) have been around long enough to see what used to be and ridden the success of what it is now," said Snieckus.

Baroness Von Sketch
Canada's newest class clowns, the female quartet served up some of the nation's sharpest sketch comedy with their TV debut on CBC.
"Those are all friends of mine from Second City and they're also at the first stages of their adventure in this," said Snieckus.

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Balance is true key to financial success

If you don't have a balanced approach to your financial life, you're going to be off-kilter. ISTOCK

ADVICE

So many mixed messages leave us confused, so clear your mind

Gail Vaz-Oxlade
For Metro Canada

One thing that confuses people about money is the number of mixed messages they receive.

On one side are companies that throw credit at you, offering cards with the latest bells and whistles, points to fly, free travel insurance, cash back. They promise you that you can have everything you want right now for just a small minimum monthly payment.

On the other side are experts who shout that debt is evil and that it's stupid to pay interest.

Who would you rather believe? The guy who tells you it's okay to go shopping, or the guy who calls you a moron for spending money you haven't yet earned?

Then there are the mixed messages about saving for retirement: On side A are Jacks who say that if you aren't making the maximum contribution to your RRSP every year, cat food will be too good for you.

On the flip side are the Jackies who claim that you shouldn't even put money in a retirement plan because RRSPs are a tax trap.

Who would you rather believe? The body that tells you to go ahead and spend all your money because saving is a waste or the body that tells you to stop stealing from your future self? Hmm.

Then there's the life insurance industry. On one side sit the boys in the T-shirts that say, "Term insurance is the best." The lads on the other side are wearing T-shirts with the slogan, "Permanent insurance is the best." So which is it?

Is it any wonder that people are confused?

While people typically associate me with debt, I don't believe that credit is the monster. Ignorance is. And it doesn't matter if you're buying a house, buying insurance, or buying an investment, if you don't have a balanced approach to your financial life, you're going to be off-kilter.

Doing anything whole hog and to the detriment of the other parts of your financial life is not only shortsighted, it's dumb.

Who would you rather believe? The guy who tells you it's okay to go shopping or the guy who calls you a moron for spending money you haven't yet earned?

Debt repayment is important, but so is having some money set aside for emergencies and to grow for the future. After all, if you're debt-free with no emergency fund, it'll only take a tiny slip to push you into the red.

The only way to find balance is to be able to hold more than one thought in your head at the same time . . . actually four thoughts, that's all:

1. Don't spend more money than you make. So no credit card or line of credit balances, and no overdraft.

2. Save something. How much depends on how old you are and how much you've already saved.

3. Get your debt paid off — consumer debt first.

4. Mitigate your risks with an emergency fund and enough of the right kind of insurance.

Stop listening to the cacophony of shouts trying to sway you to one side or the other in a debate. Think for yourself. If there are holes in your knowledge, learn. Then think.

It's how you choose to use your money that will keep you balanced financially.

For more money advice, visit Gail's website at gailvazoxlade.com

My friends wondered what I was doing differently...

I LOST 65 POUNDS WITH ZUCCARIN DIET

"My name is Josephine and I live in Toronto. I work as a nutritional planner for hospital patients. All my life I have struggled with my weight but over the last year I have finally figured it out. I am down 65 pounds now and feeling better than ever. My friends and my aqua fitness instructor keep asking me what I am up to and how I lost so much weight.

I READ ABOUT ZUCCARIN

A few years back I was told my blood sugar was too high. I was tired, craving sugar and not losing weight, so the diagnosis didn't come as a surprise. My doctor wanted to start me on medications, but I wanted to try a natural option first.

I read about a woman in Florida who had regulated her blood sugar levels naturally and while doing that lost a big amount of weight. She had been using a mulberry leaf supplement called Zuccarin.

MY WEIGHT LOSS SUCCESS

When I started using Zuccarin I first noticed that my blood sugar dropped to normal levels within days. It was great to see that result from a natural health product.

After a while I noticed how much better I felt and how my sugar cravings were fading. As a nice side effect, I was gradually losing weight, and noticing how my waist was shrinking. I was thrilled!

Now it has been over a year, and I have lost 65 pounds in total. Zuccarin has been a huge help in reducing my sugar cravings and weight. Now, when anyone asks me how I did it, I am the first to tell them about Zuccarin. I strongly recommend it to anyone who has blood sugar or weight issues, as I had."

Josephine T., Toronto, ON

* For references, please visit our website

THE SLIMMING EFFECT OF STABLE BLOOD SUGAR LEVELS

A recent Italian study of Zuccarin showed the impressive weight loss results of blocking carbohydrates. Zuccarin produced an average weight loss of **20 pounds in 90 days**. The diet group lost 10% of their weight and 3 times more fat than the people in the control group.*

TEST YOURSELF
HOW DO YOU FEEL?

- ○ I have a lack of energy
- ○ I store fat on my belly
- ○ I have difficulty losing weight
- ○ I have sugar cravings
- ○ I urinate often when drinking liquids

There are some clues that your blood sugar levels are elevated and moderately higher than normal. Try Zuccarin to help maintain healthy blood sugar level.

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Canada's Cyle Larin scored the first-ever goal at Orlando City Stadium in Sunday's 1-0 win over New York City FC

Whitecaps play to scoreless stalemate

MLS

Season opener for both Philly and Vancouver ends in a draw

The Vancouver Whitecaps failed to score on a couple second-half chances and had to settle for a 0-0 draw with the Philadelphia Union on Sunday in the opening Major League Soccer match of the season for both teams.

The Whitecaps' best scoring opportunity came in the 66th minute. Defender Jordan Harvey took a corner kick from midfielder Cristian Techera and let go a left-footed shot from the centre of the box. Union goalkeeper Andre Blake was beaten but defender Keegan Rosenberry blocked the shot, bringing a moan from the crowd of 19,083 at BC Place Stadium.

Vancouver didn't muster a shot on net during a lacklustre first half. The Union had two shots on goal.

The Whitecaps managed to intercept several Philadelphia passes but failed to turn them into serious challenges. Vancouver looked dangerous in the 25th minute when Techera took a pass in the box but sent his shot wide of the net. The Union's Chris Pontius had an opportunity in the 16th minute with a header but Harvey cleared the ball.

Fabinho, bottom left, of the Philadelphia Union collides with assistant referee Adam Wienckowski after knocking the Whitecaps' Alphonso Davies off the ball on Sunday at BC Place Stadium. DARRYL DYCK/THE CANADIAN PRESS

SUNDAY at BC Place

0	0
WHITECAPS	UNION

In a bid to create more offence, Whitecaps coach Carl Robinson substituted new striker Fredy Montero and recently acquired forward Brek Shea into the match in the 59th minute. In the 83rd minute Shea sent a dangerous cross into the box that diving Blake punched away.

Vancouver made five lineup changes from the roster that defeated the New York Red Bulls 2-0 Thursday night to win the CONCACAF Champions League quarter-final series. Among the changes, defender Sheanon Williams made his first start with the Whitecaps.

Vancouver's next game is Saturday in San Jose against the Earthquakes.

The Whitecaps are now winless in their last three season openers and are 4-2-1 overall.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

NHL

Bachman backstops Canucks past Ducks

Richard Bachman made 43 saves, Bo Horvat and Markus Granlund each scored and the Vancouver Canucks beat the Anaheim Ducks 2-1 on Sunday.

Bachman got his first win since Oct. 30, 2015, and is unbeaten in two career starts for Vancouver.

Patrick Eaves scored for the second straight game and Jonathan Bernier made 25 saves for the Ducks, who have not won consecutive games since Jan. 17-19. Anaheim's three-game winning streak at home ended, and the Ducks find themselves tied with Calgary for third place in the Pacific Division after the Flames won their seventh straight game earlier in the day.

After benefiting from some puck luck in their 4-3 win at Los Angeles on Saturday, the Canucks again capitalized on a fortunate bounce to take the lead 14:09 into the first period. Bernier thought he had smothered Ben Hutton's shot from the blue line, but the puck trickled free from under his left arm. Horvat was waiting at the foot of the crease and easily tapped in his second goal in three games.

Granlund made it 2-0 early in the second on a breakaway, putting his shot from the faceoff circle between Bernier's legs.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SUNDAY in Anaheim

2	1
CANUCKS	DUCKS

IN BRIEF

Thompson caps World Cup season with seventh win

Marielle Thompson won gold in ski cross on Sunday at the final World Cup event of the season.

Thompson, of Whistler, had already clinched the Crystal Globe as the season winner before taking Sunday's race.

Canada finished 1-2 in the men's final with Brady Leman winning gold and Chris del Bosco claiming second. Canada was also presented with the Nation's Cup as the top team on the season. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Johnson plays up to ranking

Dustin Johnson survived a few anxious moments on the back nine by playing mistake-free when it mattered to win the Mexico Championship in his debut as the No. 1 player in the world.

Johnson blasted out of a fairway bunker to the middle of the 18th green to secure a two-putt par for a 3-under 68 and a one-shot victory over Tommy Fleetwood of England.

Johnson became the fifth player to win in his debut at No. 1. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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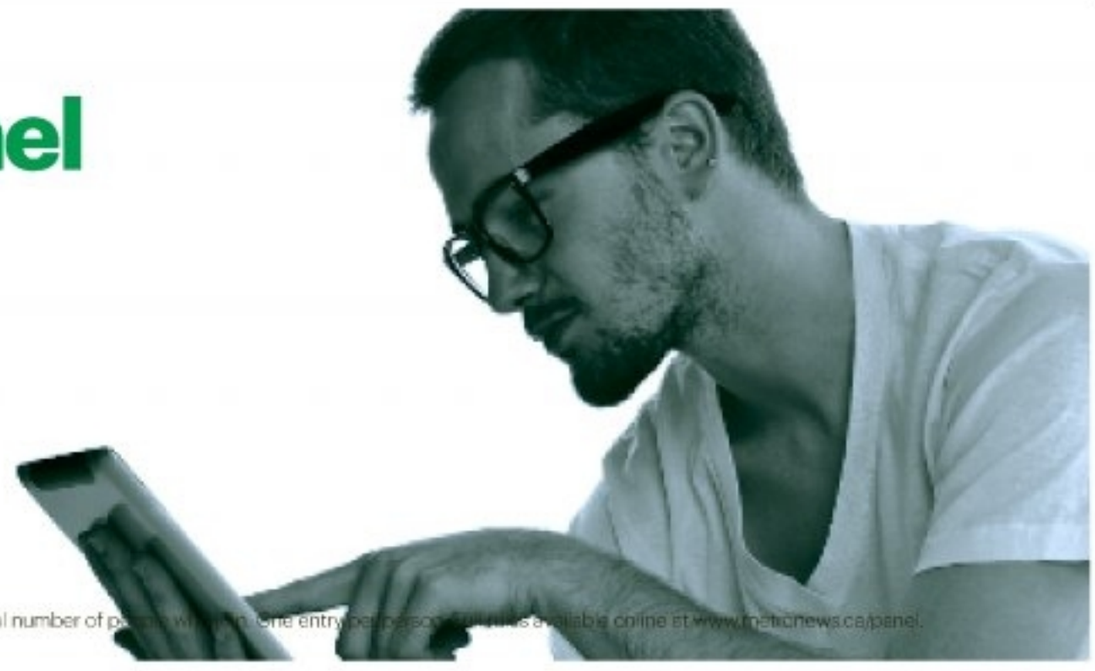


*No purchase necessary. Entry period is Monday, February 6, until Friday, March 31, 2017 at 11:59 pm. Odds of winning depend on total number of p… one entry per person … is available online at www.metronews.ca/panel.

MAKE IT TONIGHT

Comforting Slow Cooker Chicken Stew

PHOTO: MAYA VISNYEI

Ceri Marsh & Laura Keogh
For Metro Canada

We're sad to say, it's not spring yet so you're still going to need some warming, rib-sticking dinners like this easy-peasy chicken dinner.

Ready in 6 hours 10 minutes
Prep time: 10 minutes
Cook time: 6 minutes
Serves 4

Ingredients
- 6 chicken thighs
- 1 potato, peeled and cubed
- 1 Tbsp vegetable oil
- 2 onions, chopped
- 4 stalks celery, chopped
- 2 carrots, peeled and chopped
- 1 Tbsp fresh thyme (1 tsp dried)
- 1 or 2 bay leaves
- 1/4 cup flour
- 2 cups low-sodium chicken stock
- 1 cup fresh or frozen peas
- 1/2 cup light cream

Directions

1. In a Dutch oven or high-sided skillet, sauté onions, celery and carrots in splash of vegetable oil for about five minutes.

2. Add flour, thyme and bay leaves and stir for a minute. Add stock and stir until smooth. Simmer for 3 or 4 minutes until sauce thickens.

3. Add the potatoes and a good pinch of salt and pepper.

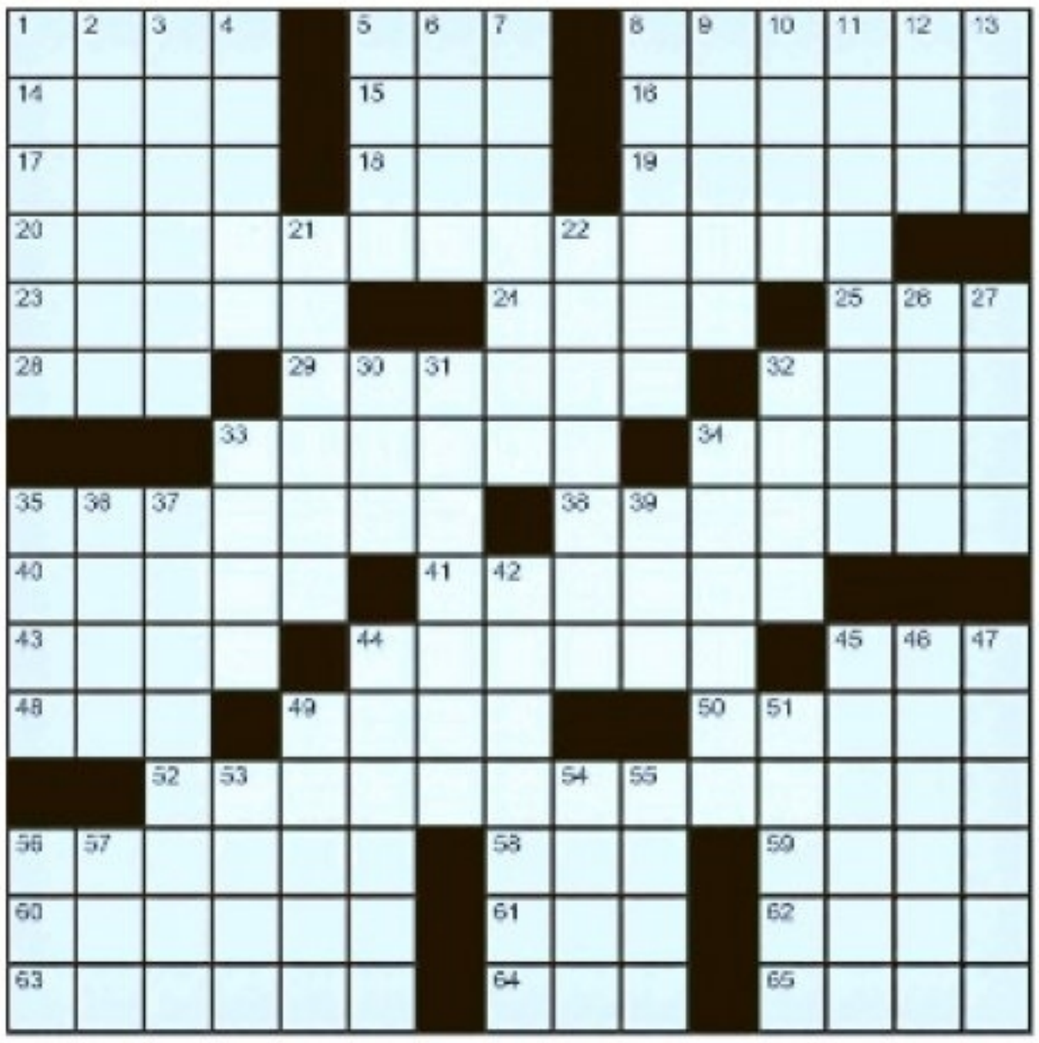
4. Place chicken thighs in the bottom of slow cooker and spoon the vegetable mixture over. Seal and set for 6 hours.

5. Add peas and cream and cook for 10 more minutes. Serve plain or over mashed potatoes.

FOR MORE MEAL IDEAS, VISIT SWEETPOTATOCHRONICLES.COM

CROSSWORD Canada Across and Down

BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



ACROSS
1. Telecommunications speed unit
5. Unpaired
8. Canadian pilot Billy Bishop (b.1894 - d.1956), for one: 2 wds.
14. 'Height'-meaning prefix
15. Masses, with Polloi
16. Like a widely recognized symbol
17. Lettered frozen dessert chain
18. Possibilities
19. Yellow-bordered mag since 1888: 2 wds.
20. 1847: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's epic 'Evangeline' poem: 4 wds.
23. Building extension
24. Delivery vehicles
25. Dustup
28. San Francisco's _ Valley
29. Futuristic cards
32. Climbing plant's one-of-some
33. Fame
34. Vivian of "I Love Lucy"
35. Word's opposite meaning word
38. Got even
40. Bible king
41. Have ambitions
43. The Phantom's name in Gaston Leroux's classic novel The Phantom of the Opera
44. Socially belongs: 2 wds.
45. Wine classification, Grand _
48. Broom alternative
49. Adjust the dial
50. Greyish
52. Ontario's provincial flower: 2 wds.
56. Pauley Perrette's character on "NCIS", Abby _
58. Triste
59. Sky bear
60. Harvey of "The Carol Burnett Show"
61. Lacto-_ (Vegetarian type)
62. Accelerated in the auto
63. Leafy salad ingredients
64. '_' _ for Newfoundland
65. London, England's _ Park

DOWN
1. WWII battleground Peninsula in the Philippines
2. Identifying info on a bank statement, for short: 2 wds.
3. Refined
4. Writer, Sir Arthur Conan _ (b.1859 - d.1930)
5. Columbus, _
6. Politely tip one's hat
7. Deny
8. Gospel singer CeCe
9. Training institutes, for short
10. _ de boeuf
11. Making mad
12. Business: Co., in French
13. Umberto _ (Foucault's Pendulum author)
21. Stretch
22. Short snoozes
26. As soon as
27. Unwanted plant
30. "Pick a card, _ card."
31. Caesar Salad ingredient
32. Barn pointer
33. Chess piece
34. _ equinox
35. "Cough..."
36. Pianist/conductor, Peter _
37. Hidden trap activator: 2 wds.
39. Gladiator's lucky number
42. Rancher's hat
44. Sofas-turned-beds
45. What the happily-making-noise bird is
46. Practiced eco-friendliness
47. Bed, upon rising
49. Tennessee football player
51. Partially frozen colourful drink
53. Canadian actor Mr. Cronyn
54. Sitarist, _ Shankar
55. Wedding vows: 2 wds.
56. Film studio, DreamWorks _ _ _
57. _ anglais (English horn)

IT'S ALL IN THE STARS Your daily horoscope by Francis Drake

Aries March 21 - April 20
This is a great day to research anything or dig for answers. You will not stop until you find what you're looking for..

Taurus April 21 - May 21
Enjoy all your relationships with friends and members of groups today, because people are upbeat and glad to see you. Share your hopes and dreams for the future with someone to get his or her feedback.

Gemini May 22 - June 21
You are high-viz now, with the Sun high in your chart. This also means you look good to bosses and VIPs, which is why you should make your pitch. Ask for what you want.

Cancer June 22 - July 23
Make travel plans or do anything that will expand your life experience today, because you want to learn more and feel adventurous. What can you do?

Leo July 24 - Aug. 23
Discussions about shared property, taxes, debt and insurance issues will go well. This includes anything to do with inheritances and the wealth of your partner.

Virgo Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
This is a strong day for a heart-to-heart discussion with a partner or close friend. People are ready to meet you halfway, and vice versa.

Libra Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
Think of ways that you can get better organized both at home and at work. Not only will you be happy to be better organized, you also will want to do something to improve your health.

Scorpio Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
This is a playful, fun-loving creative day for you. Enjoy sports events, activities with children, the arts and all social diversions.

Sagittarius Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
A conversation with a parent could be significant today. In either case, you will focus on home, family and your private life.

Capricorn Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
Listen to yourself today. Make a point of being clear in all your communications with others. People want to hear what you have to say.

Aquarius Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
You are giving thought to cash flow, earnings and your assets today. That's because you're giving yourself a report card that is based on earnings and wealth.

Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
All your dealings with others today will be quite successful, because you are coming from a strong space. Your confidence is obvious, which is why others will listen to you.

CONCEPTIS SUDOKU by Dave Green

Every row, column and box contains 1-9

	2			7	3	5		
7	5						9	
		3			1			2
			1	2		3		8
4								6
1		9		8	4			
2			7			6		
	7						8	4
		6	8	9			5	

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FRIDAY'S ANSWERS

Your daily crossword and Sudoku answers from the play page.

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6	2	3	8	1	5	7	9	4
7	8	1	6	4	9	5	3	2
9	4	5	3	7	2	6	8	1
2	5	8	7	3	4	1	6	9
3	1	6	2	9	8	4	7	5
4	9	7	1	5	6	8	2	3
5	3	2	4	6	7	9	1	8
1	7	9	5	8	3	2	4	6
8	6	4	9	2	1	3	5	7

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